

# Food. The facts of the matter.

A few home truths  
about some old wives tales.



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## Does eating fat make us fat?



# fact

Fat is vital for life, it's all about choosing the right kinds.



We need to switch our thinking about fat from the amount we eat to the type we eat. The fact is, we gain weight from eating more energy or kilojoules than we burn, and it doesn't matter where those excess kilojoules come from. Fats are high in energy or kilojoules which can add up quickly if over-consumed. But fat is also

vital for life, and for good health it's all about making better choices. Good fats provide essential nutrients and can also lower cholesterol. Healthy fats (including omega 3 and 6) can be found in foods like canola oil, sunflower oil, olive oil, margarine spreads, nuts, seeds, avocado and fish. Unhealthy fats or saturated fats can be

found in foods like commercially-produced cakes and biscuits, full fat dairy foods and fatty meat products. It's easy to make simple changes. Switch to low fat milk and limit cakes to once a week or less. Choose a Heart Foundation Tick approved spread instead of butter and save over two kilos of harmful saturated fat per year.

1. National Health and Medical Research Council. Clinical Practice Guidelines for the Management of Overweight and Obesity in Adults, Commonwealth of Australia, 2003.
2. Sacks FM et al., Comparison of weight-loss diets with different compositions of fat, protein and carbohydrates. NEJM 2009; 360(9): 859-73.
3. National Heart Foundation of Australia. Dietary fats and dietary sterols for cardiovascular health. Position statement, 2009.
4. National Heart Foundation of New Zealand. An evidence-based nutrition statement from the nutrition advisory committee on dietary fats, 1999.
5. National Heart Foundation of Australia. Tips to reduce saturated fat, 2009.
6. Ministry of Health. Food and Nutrition Guidelines for Healthy Adults: A Background Paper. Wellington: Ministry of Health, 2003b.

# Are foods claiming they are 'natural' always the healthy choice?

## fact

Don't fall into the natural trap - 'natural' foods are not always healthy.



Supermarket shelves are bulging with foods claiming to be natural. Despite their positive image, natural foods and healthy foods are not necessarily the same thing. Foods claiming to be natural can still be high in kilojoules, saturated fat, sugar or salt. Butter is an example of a natural food that is high in unhealthy saturated

fat. Rather than choosing foods based on their claim of being natural, look for labels such as "reduced salt", "low fat" or the Heart Foundation Tick (see logo below) to help find the healthier choices within a food category. Packaged foods carrying these nutrition claims can be a healthy meal option for time-poor families. It's also worth

checking the nutrition information on the label to choose foods lower in saturated fat, sugar and salt. When it comes to organic foods, there is no evidence they are more nutritious than conventionally-grown foods. Both organic and conventionally grown foods can provide all the nutrients required when included in a healthy balanced diet.



# Do I need to watch my salt intake if I don't add it to my food?



## fact

Salt is hidden in many processed food products, become a salt sleuth.



Most of us eat too much salt even without picking up the salt shaker. About 80% of the salt in our diet comes from processed foods. Many Australians and New Zealanders consume more salt than is needed for good health. This is a problem as it increases our risk of high blood pressure and therefore the risk of heart

disease and stroke. Reducing salt intake to less than 6g a day (2,300mg of sodium) is a step in the right direction. Check food labels and ideally choose foods which are “low salt” as they meet the strictest criteria of less than 120mg of sodium per 100g. Foods labelled as “reduced salt”, “no added salt” or with the Heart Foundation

Tick indicate healthier choices too. It won't take long for your taste buds to adjust to less salt, and you'll enjoy the many other wonderful flavours in food.

## Is snacking good or bad for you?



### fact

It's not a matter of if you snack, but if you snack smart.



Many people equate snacking with poor food choices or 'junk foods'. But eating healthily can include snacks alongside three main meals. What's important is to be smart about the type and amount of food you snack on. Adults don't have to eat snacks, but those high in protein, may help us feel full for longer so can be useful

in weight management. Healthy growing children often need 2-3 nutritious snacks a day, in addition to 3 balanced meals, to get all the energy, vitamins and minerals they need for optimal growth and development. Smart snack choices for children include a piece of fruit, vegetable sticks with hummus, plain air-popped popcorn,

and low fat dairy foods or look for foods that are:

- Under 600 kilojoules (kJ) per serve
- Reduced or low in saturated fat and salt
- Provide essential nutrients (such as calcium)
- Available in small portion sizes

# Do I need to drink 8 glasses of water a day?

## fact

Having plenty of water is the best way to keep fluids up, but other drinks count too.

Not drinking enough can lead to poor concentration and fatigue. The exact amount of fluid needed each day depends on how much you weigh, how active you are and the climate where you live. Most adults need to drink about 2-2.5 litres of fluid daily. Drinking water is the best way to keep fluids up, but it's not the only way.

All beverages, except for alcohol count towards your fluid intake. Choose options like tea and low-fat milk. Contrary to popular belief, caffeine-containing drinks such as tea do not act as a diuretics or cause dehydration when regularly consumed. Substituting drinks high in kilojoules can help keep your body weight

in check too. Swap your regular latte for a skim/trim one or a cup of tea to save over 200 kilojoules. Switch from high sugar to diet drinks. Fruit and vegetables are about 90% water so also contribute to fluid intake – which is another good reason to eat more of them.



1. Grandjean AC and Grandjean NR. Dehydration and cognitive performance. *J Am Coll Nutr* 2007; 26(5S):549-554S.
2. National Health and Medical Research Council and the New Zealand Ministry of Health. *Nutrient Reference Values for Australia and New Zealand*. Commonwealth of Australia, 2006.
3. Popkin BM et al., A new proposed guidance system for beverage consumption in the United States. *Am J Clin Nutr* 2006; 83(3): 529-42.
4. Maughan et al., Caffeine ingestion and fluid balance: a review. *J Hum Nutr Dietet* 2003; 16: 411-20.
5. Olsen and Heitmann. Intake of calorically sweetened beverages and obesity. *Obes Rev* 2009; 10: 68-75
6. Athar N et al., 2006. *The Concise New Zealand Composition Tables*. 7th Edition Palmerston North: New Zealand Institute for Crop and Food Research Ltd; Wellington: Ministry of Health

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- [www.heartfoundation.org.au](http://www.heartfoundation.org.au) or
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